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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR JANUARY 03, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for January 03, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

RADIKAL / HURRIYET / EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Private Coskun Kirandi was kidnapped on the Tunceli-Pulumur road on July 11, 2005 by PKK terrorists (see press summaries 07/12 and 13) who later surrendered Kirandi on August 4, 2005 to a delegation made up of the members of the Human Rights Association (HRA) at a village of Tunceli. Investigations, which were initiated against the association members and the journalists who accompanied the delegation, were recently completed and the trial has begun against HRA Diyarbakir Cahirperson Selahattin Demirtas, HRA Regional Representative Mihdi Perincek, artist Ferhat Tunc, journalist-author Umut Hozatli, Tunceli Municipality City Council Chairperson Ozgur Soylemez, two journalists from DIHA (Dicle News Agency), one journalist from DHA (Dogan News Agency), and one journalist from AA (Anatolia News Agency), on grounds that the delegation and the journalists involved themselves in propaganda for the outlawed PKK. The indictment branded the delegation to which Kirandi was submitted as a "so-called delegation" that was not appointed via legal state instruments. The first court hearing will be held on March 3 in Tunceli and defendants are reportedly facing a maximum 3 year prison sentence.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily drew attention to the early-December remarks of the police officer Hakan Acil, who was kidnapped on October 3, 2005 by PKK terrorists (see press summaries 10/11 and 12), who said, "As it was in the case of Private Kirandi, I am hoping that I would be released soon through the efforts of the Human Rights Association."

HURRIYET / EVRENSEL: Hilmi Ozkok, Chief of Turkish General Staff, said that the Anti-terror Law should be updated and revised to reinforce its effectiveness. Ozkok said that the recent amendments to the law were insufficient, and he further warned that recent discourse has been abusive of the concept of democracy and benefited the terrorists.

RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM: The chief doctor of the Van Centennial University (VCU) Medical School's Research Hospital, stating that recent health conditions of VCU Rector Yucel Askin were good, announced that the analysis that would be held tomorrow would determine whether Askin will be allowed to leave the hospital or not.

RADIKAL / HURRIYET / EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Ankara Health Institute reportedly announced that avian influenza was not found in a 14-year-old child who died following his transfer from Agri's Dogubeyazit district to the Research Hospital of VCU's Medical School in Van. VCU's chief doctor announced that the cause of the child's death was pneumonia. Family members of the child, who were hospitalized as well, were also reported as having contracted pneumonia. An outbreak of avian influenza in poultry found in a province in proximity to the Agri province (see press summary 12/30), has caused rumors about a bird flu case to surface recently at VCU following the child's transfer. Relatives of the hospital's patients, who are worried because hospital staff members have started wearing masks, reportedly began leaving the hospital. The caption of the Ozgur Gundem daily news article reads, "Are authorities covering up the bird flu incidents?" Evrensel daily further reported the suspicious deaths of 15 poultry in Erzurum's Horasan district. The state and municipality officers formed special teams in the district and started gathering the poultry from homes to slaughter them later.

EKSPRES: A hundred and ninety two officers from Adana's Tax Office conducted inspections on New Year's night at 182 entertainment venues. Head of the Tax Office said that the lesser number of fines imposed proved a better record on the part of Adana tax-payers.

BOLGE / EKSPRES / EVRENSEL: The daily reported the growing support extended for continuing protests against the decision by Turkey's Privatization Authority to close down Adana's state-run TEKEL Cigarette Factory. Fifty members of the Basic Rights and Liberties Association staged a protest in front of the factory along with the factory workers yesterday at noon.

SABAH (GUNEY) / BOLGE / EKSPRES / RADIKAL: An arts studio

in Adana covered some of the billboards in Adana with photographs of veterans of the Turkish Independence War to mark the occasion of the 84th anniversary of liberating Adana from occupying forces on January 5. Separately, Mersin province will celebrate the city's liberation from enemy forces 84 years ago today. Radikal daily separately reported that two teachers from Hatay applied to European Court of Human Rights to file a complaint against France, which allegedly exploited the resources and richness of the province during its occupation in 1920s.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Sakine Kiran (48), whose husband was killed in Mardin's Derik district (on an unspecified date), said that his son went abroad two years ago as a result of the oppression exerted by the security forces. Sakine Kiran, who currently lives in Adana, complained that Jandarma officers were frequently coming and putting pressure on her to enable surrender of her son.

RADIKAL / HURRIYET / EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Following the recent remarks of Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Gul made against the 56 mayors (from Democratic Society Party) who sent a December 30-dated letter to the Prime Minister of Denmark to prevent the black-out of pro-PKK Roj-TV on grounds that their electoral base demanded that the broadcast of the station should continue, Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office has started a probe against the mayors, including Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir, Tunceli Mayor Songul Erol Abdil, and Batman Mayor Huseyin Kalkan.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Diyarbakir Yenisehir district mayor Firat Anli warned that the growing tension among people of southeastern Turkey may cause "fault lines to break," and "an earthquake might be triggered" by the people of the region at any time.

EVRENSEL: The daily highlighted some statements from the recent report of the Turkish Parliament's Human Rights Commission (for probing honor killings) that was generated following the commission's latest visit to southeastern Turkey. According to the report, falling in love with somebody, talking to a man, losing one's virginity, and going out without obtaining permission from parents are deemed as immoral and unchaste actions (for women). According to the report, 83.7 percent of the people hold the opinion that those women who do not protect their chastity should be punished and women should act in an obedient and acquiescent manner.

SABAH (GUNEY): Gaziantep Mayor Asim Guzelbey reported on the services provided by the municipality in 2005 and announced new projects to be undertaken in 2006 in Gaziantep.

HURRIYET: The muhtar (headman) of Mersin's Karaaga village, his son and his nephew were reportedly ambushed and shot dead in a forest area by two people, who surrendered themselves to the Jandarma later. The attack was reportedly caused by a dispute between the attackers and the headman.

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